(a) whether the unauthorised construction on forest land has increased on a large scale and the incidents of poaching of wild animals have also increased due to the absence of Forest Guards in sufficient numbers;

(b) if so, whether a large number of key posts in Forest Departments of the States are lying vacant; and

(c) the details of the steps to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Owing to a large number of vacancies among the frontiline staff in the Forest Departments of the States, development and protection of forests and wildlife is suffering. However, there are no reports of increase in unauthorised construction on a large scale on forest land and spurt in incidents of poaching of wild animals.

(c) Filling up of vacanices in State Forest Departments is the responsibility of the States. However, the Prime Minister has written to the Chief Ministers of all the States on 29-3-2001 emphasising, inter alia, on the need for filling up of vacant posts in Forest Department. Further, for improving wildlife protection, referring to the letter of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Enviornment and Forests has also written to the Chief Minister of all the States on 22-7-2002 urging to delegate the power of appointing field staff to the officials of Wildlife Wing of the State.

Increase in Endangered Species of Birds

†2133. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Bombay Natural History Society and 'Bird Life International' have sounded a warning that the number of endangered speices of birds in India is increasing at an alarming rate;

(b) if so, whether these bodies have indicated that birds like Pinhead duck, Forest outlet, Zardones Coorser, Himalayan Mountain Qualea

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Sarascrane and two species of vultures are also included amongst the birds facing extinction and there is need to protect them; and

(c) if so, the steps being taken by Government to protect these birds?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV) : (a) Bombay natural History Society (BNHS), Bird Life International and several other organizations have expressed concern over decline in population of several species of birds in India.

(b) Pink Headed Duck and Himalayan Mountain Quail were last sighted in 1935 and 1876 respectively and are considered extinct. Others species like Forest Spotted Owlet, Jerdon's courser, Saras crane and two species of vultures are also considered endangered.

(c) The steps taken by the Government to protect the birds are as follows:

(i) Protection status of endangered species of Vultures has been upgraded from Schedule-IV to Schedule-I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 providing it the highest degree of protection under the Act.

(ii) An in-situ conservation project for two endangered species of Vultures has been taken up in Haryana.

(iii) Crucial habitats of various species of wild animals and birds have been notified as National parks and Sanctuaries. Important National Parks and Sanctuaries are also notified as Ramsar Sites and World Natural Heritage Sites.

(iv) Government of India supports scientific research for monitoring the population status of various species and for evolving strategies for in-situ and ex-situ conservation of various species.

(v) Financial assistance is provided to State Governments for effective management of National parks and sanctuaries.

(vi) Awarness is being generated amongst local people for protection of rare species of birds and their habitats.

(vii) Special workshop were organized on the threat status of vultures and their habitats.

Pollution in rivers due to municipal waste and sewerage

2134. SHRI H.K. JAVARE GOWDA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that rivers in the country are being becoming more and more polluted due to discharge of municipal waste and sewerage;

(b) if so, whether Government propose to take steps as the Traditional Japanese never discharged waste into the rivers; and

(c) the details of the cost that may be required for such projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV) : (a) and (c) Yes, Sir. The Government is implementing National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) for diverting and treating the municipal waste in 157 towns along 31 polluted stretches of major rivers in 18 states. The sewage after treatment is used for irrigation, wherever feasible. A total of 782 projects have been sanctioned under NRCP at a cost of Rs. 3081.89 crore.

National Environment Action Plan

2135. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated a new National Environment Action Plan;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the difference between the new and old 'Action Plan';

(d) whether any provision has been made for providing funds to SPCB under new action plan;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reason therefor?